MINUTES OF MEETING OF COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., OCTOBER 8, 1925.

The second meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts during the fiscal year 1926 was held in its office in the Interior Department Building, on Thursday, October 8, 1925.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Greenleaf,
Mr. Mowbray,
Mr. Delano,
Mr. Taft,
also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Secretary and Executive Officer.

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRECEDING MEETING: The minutes of the meeting held September 3, 1925, were approved.

2. CHAPLAINS' WORLD WAR MEMORIAL: Under date of September 22, 1925, the Commission received the following communication from Hon. Dwight F. Davis, Acting Secretary of War, requesting advice as to the proposed Chaplains' World War Memorial:

> "I am pleased to invite your attention to the attached communication, with inclosures, from the Chief of Chaplains, United States Army, who requests authority to place a memorial tablet in Arlington Cemetery in honor of twenty-three Chaplains who gave their lives in the World War.
>
> The opinion of the Federal Commission of Fine Arts is requested, with the return of this correspondence, as to the suitability of this design for the purpose desired."

The design consisted of a bronze tablet bearing the names of the twenty-three Chaplains, to be mounted upon a natural granite boulder, and to be placed in the Arlington National Cemetery on a knoll near the eastern end of the area bounded by Grant, McClellan and Sheridan Avenues.

Upon the recommendation of Mr. Taft, the Commission disapproved the

tablet, as being of the ordinary stock type, and were decidedly opposed to placing a boulder in Arlington, that being prohibited by the regulations of August 5, 1916.

The Commission recommended that this memorial take the form of an inscription cut on one of the pilasters in the interior of the Arlington Amphitheater. The Commission felt that these pilasters are eminently fitting for memorials of this character, and they provide space for placing memorial inscriptions in future years. It was understood, however, that this would require the approval of Congress. The Acting Secretary of War was informed of the recommendations of the Commission. (Exhibit A).

3. COAST GUARD WORLD WAR MEMORIAL: Further consideration was given to the selection of a designer for the Coast Guard World War Memorial, and upon the recommendation of Mr. Delano the Commission selected Mr. George Howe, Architect, of the firm of Mellor, Meigs and Howe, Philadelphia, as the designer. The Coast Guard was advised accordingly (Exhibit B).

Mr. Moore stated that he had been informed that a fountain 17 feet in diameter, in marble, would cost $4,000, without embellishment. The site suggested by the Commission for the Memorial is on the first triangle west of the Dewey Mausoleum.

THOMAS CIRCLE, LANDSCAPE TREATMENT:

4. By letter addressed to the Chairman on October 1st, Lieut. Col. C.O. Sherrill, Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, requested the advice of the Commission with reference to planting flowers in Thomas Circle, as follows:

> "I inclose herewith copy of a letter from the Thomas Circle Citizens' Association, urging that the flowers be restored to Thomas Circle. As you know the Commission of Fine Arts have always opposed this formal planting in Thomas Circle as being inappropriate

and the Garden Club of America on May 11, 1925, after a number of conferences on the matter made a formal recommendation that these flowers be omitted.

Will you kindly bring this matter to the attention of the Commission of Fine Arts with request that their advice be furnished me as to the propriety of restoring the flowers in the form in which they have heretofore been planted and for any other suggestion that will allow me to carry out the wishes of the neighborhood and at the same time to have an artistic and harmonious treatment."

The matter was referred to Mr. Greenleaf, who protested against the planting of flowers in Thomas Circle. Mr. Greenleaf gave consideration to the subject of landscape treatment of circles and other public areas in Washington, and his recommendations, which the Commission of Fine Arts approved, were embodied in a report and sent to Colonel Sherrill (Exhibit C).

5. BRIGHTWOOD SCHOOL, design of tower: Acting Municipal Architect Holmes submitted a sketch of a tower for the Brightwood School, concerning which he desired the advice of the Commission. Mr. Delano advised a restudy and suggested changes which will be shown in a new design to be submitted to the Commission.

6. BATHING POOLS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: Mr. Moore stated that there is considerable discussion in Washington about the location of new bathing pools, and that he had just received a letter from Hon. Carter Glass on the subject, as follows, pursuant to the receipt of a report furnished by the City Manager of Lynchburg on their bathing pools:

Lynchburg, Virginia,
October 5, 1925.

"My dear Mr. Moore:

I am glad to have contributed anything to the information which the Commission of Fine Arts is seeking with reference to the establishment of bathing pools in Washington. I am glad to see that Colonel Sherrill and the District Commission have decided to establish these pools instead of persisting in the controversy over the use of the Tidal Basin for such purposes. I have been not a little amused over the fact that the Washington newspapers seem at last to have found out that the best medical authority in Washington long ago, and

without reservation, condemned the use of the Tidal Basin as dangerously unsanitary. This fact was the main reason given by the Appropriations Committee of the Senate for refusal longer to appropriate for the Tidal Basin beaches. The point was fully elaborated on the floor of the Senate; and yet the Washington papers omitted to print the truth and, along with several assinine Congressmen, abused Congress for acting on the advice of eminent physicians.

Very truly yours,
Carter Glass.

Mr. Moore advised that one or two large pools should be placed in East Potomac Park, another in Anacostia Park, and that as needs require additional pools should be constructed and maintained in the large playgrounds in various parts of the city. They should be supplied with filtered water and adequately equipped for sterilizing bathing suits. The Commission concurred in the matter.

7. ANACOSTIA PARK DEVELOPMENT: The Commission made a trip of inspection of the Anacostia Park, in a launch furnished by the Harbor Police, going first all the way from the Benning Bridge north to the District Line. Mr. Greenleaf called attention to the importance of preserving some of the marsh land in its natural state, it being understood that part of the area will be used for an Aquatic Garden; also for the sake of supplying food for the birds. The use of sea walls he said should be reduced to a minimum, and such as are built should not be so high that the islands seem separated from the water by walls. Mr. Greenleaf advised taking into the reclamation work the marsh land north of the District Line towards Hyattsville and bringing that land into the park area. He also recommended constructing a shore drive, as soon as possible, along the western edge of the Anacostia Park from the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge to the District Line, where it would connect with the proposed Fort Drive west to Rock Creek Park.

The Commission also inspected the Anacostia Park area south of the Benning Bridge to the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge. Here the possibilities of developing a splendid park were recognized, though it was regretted that the walls constructed to protect the islands had been built so high. While it is understood that the Anacostia Park is to be a recreation park, Mr. Greenleaf felt that some of the reeds and other existing marsh grasses should be allowed to remain also in this area, for its picturesqueness and to protect the wild birds. It is a known fact that these marshes are a stopping place for migratory birds.

8. MEADE MEMORIAL INSCRIPTIONS: By letter dated October 6, 1925, Lieut. Col. C. O. Sherrill requested the advice of the Commission with reference to designs submitted therewith showing details of the granite paving, benches, and tablet with bronze lettering, for the Meade Memorial, as follows:

> "There are enclosed herewith, for consideration by the Commission of Fine Arts, three blueprints prepared by the architects for the Meade Memorial, showing details of the granite paving, benches, and tablet with bronze lettering, which are to be constructed in connection with the Memorial.
>
> The inscription which it is proposed to place on the granite tablet is as follows:

By the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
to
MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GORDON MEADE
who on native soil at
GETTYSBURG
in 1863
in mighty battle
directed the Union Army that swept
back the tide of Confederate invasion
and assured the triumph of
Human Freedom and National Unity.

> I shall be glad to have the views of the Commission as to the suitability of the designs and the inscription as soon as practicable, in order that contracts may be let at an early date for the completion of the Memorial."

As to the design for the benches, it was noted that although the architects Simon and Simon have repeatedly been advised to have their design conform to the type of bench prepared in the Office of McKim, Mead and White, which was approved by the Commission of Fine Arts on January 7, 1921, and which is also to serve as the type of bench for the Mall, there was still a discrepancy in their design of bench submitted. Mr. Delano noted on the drawings from Simon and Simon that the lower part of the base of the bench should be 1 foot 4 inches wide. The bench will be 18 inches high.

The Commission recommended simplification of the wording of the inscription, and Colonel Sherrill was advised accordingly (Exhibit D).

9. ROCK CREEK AND POTOMAC PARKWAY: Under date of September 5, 1925, the following letter, together with plans, was received from Lieut. Col. C. O. Sherrill, requesting the advice of the Commission of Fine Arts as to the development of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway:

> "I inclose herewith five blueprints of the revised plan for the development of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway between Potomac Park and the Zoo.
>
> It is requested that this plan be brought before the Commission of Fine Arts, and that I be advised as to the views of the Commission as to the merits of the plan and be furnished any suggestions that the Commission considers advisable in reference thereto.
>
> I will be glad to go over with the Commission personally this plan sometime during its next meeting and would be glad if the Commission will arrange to call at the New Navy Building for an examination of the model which has been made of the proposed development.
>
> Efforts have been made repeatedly by this office for the last few years to get an appropriation to complete the seawall at the foot of the Parkway with a view to initiating its improvement but without success, due to the economy program under which the Government is now acting.
>
> The area of the Parkway, particularly the lower part, is in such a horribly unsightly condition that it appears to me very essential that the improvement be pushed as rapidly as possible to remove one of the worst eyesores in Washington."

In view of the importance of the subject, the Chairman had requested Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect, to make an inspection of the Parkway, which he did on September 25, 1925, and submitted a report on the subject. Mr. Olmsted has been interested in the development of the Parkway for 25 years, having been a member of the Senate Park Commission of 1901. Mr. Greenleaf, Landscape Architect member of the Commission, made an inspection of the Parkway on October 7, 1925. Mr. Greenleaf fully endorsed the recommendations of Mr. Olmsted, excepting as to the treatment proposed at the Massachusetts Avenue crossing. Mr. Olmsted disapproved "tunnelling" Massachusetts Avenue at the depth proposed in the plans, favoring a cut higher up the slope augmented by retaining walls. Mr. Greenleaf, after visiting the locality and seeing the massive culvert through which Rock Creek flows in passing under Massachusetts Avenue, decided that to save unnecessary expense, and have the Parkway in this locality constructed as it must ultimately be, Massachusetts Avenue should be "tunnelled" now.

The Commission discussed the plans in the afternoon with Colonel Sherrill, and Major Carey Brown, James G. Langdon, Landscape Architect, and Irving W. Payne, Landscape Architect, of Colonel Sherrill's office. The suggestions made were generally agreed to.

The Commission submitted a report to Colonel Sherrill with regard to these plans for the development of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, embodying recommendations of Mr. Greenleaf and Mr. Olmsted, which is attached hereto and made a part of these Minutes (Exhibit E).

The Commission adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

C O P Y

October 12, 1925.

Sir:

Your letter of September 22, enclosing correspondence, together with photograph, concerning the Chaplains World War Memorial, received the attention of the Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on October 8, 1925.

The Commission could not approve the tablet. It is of the ordinary "stock" type, very crude and cheap and ugly. Public taste has now advanced beyond the boulder stage, and the regulations of August 5, 1916, pertaining to Arlington prohibit the use of the boulder.

The Commission recommend that this memorial take the form of an inscription cut on one of the pilasters in the interior of the Arlington Amphitheater. These pilasters, it seems to the Commission, are eminently fitting for memorials of this character, and they provide space for placing memorial inscriptions in future years. Such action requires the approval of the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater Commission (Public No.397, 66th Congress). The architects of the Amphitheater have long desired that memorial inscriptions be placed in that structure in order to add the element of personal interest. The correspondence is herewith returned.

By order of the Commission:

Very respectfully, yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Hon. Dwight F. Davis,
Acting Secretary of War,
Washington, D. C.

EXHIBIT A.

COPY

October 9, 1925.

Dear Sir:

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on October 8, 1925, gave further consideration to the question of a designer for the Coast Guard World War Memorial, and recommend to your Committee the appointment of Mr. George Howe, Architect, of the firm of Mellor, Meigs and Howe, 205 South Juniper Street, Philadelphia, Pa., as the designer of your memorial. If this is agreeable to your Committee, arrangements can be made to have Mr. Howe come to Washington for a conference as to type of design and location. The Commission of Fine Arts again expressed the opinion that a fountain in the Arlington National Cemetery would make a very appropriate memorial, both distinctive and beautiful for the Coast Guard World War Memorial.

Very respectfully, yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Commander W. J. Wheeler, Chairman,
Coast Guard World War Memorial,
Washington, D. C.

P.S. I have consulted the Superintendent at Arlington and find that the water supply comes from the Washington system, and that there should be no trouble about water. The Acting Secretary is going to Arlington with me soon and I will talk to him. Until then perhaps it would be best not to talk about a fountain.

C.M.

EXHIBIT B.

COPY

October 22, 1925.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of October 1st, enclosing a copy of a communication from Mr. Starr Parsons, President of the Thomas Circle Citizens' Association, with reference to planting flowers in Thomas Circle, received the attention of the Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on October 8,1925.

Several years ago the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds planted Scott Circle with a border of ivy backed by a low hedge of box. The remainder of the Circle was left in turf. The triangles facing the Circle received like treatment. This has seemed to the Commission of Fine Arts the most satisfactory treatment that has been devised; and the Commission has urged, and now urges, that this style be followed throughout the city.

Washington is essentially a winter city and it should be dressed accordingly. As one passes up and down the streets the eye should be greeted by the green of plants and trees. The magnolia, the ivy, the cedar and other trees and plants that keep their color throughout the year should be used at focal points and as the framework of vistas.

Flowers have an important place in the adornment of a city. For effectiveness they should be massed; color and form should be considered; the changes of season should be accommodated. Little flower beds in circles have a month or so of color. During the winter they present bare spots that suggest neglect and lack of understanding.

The representatives of the Garden Club of America did a real service to the community in calling attention to the treatment of the circles in Washington and suggesting that these spaces be treated with sobriety, dignity and effectiveness.

Thomas Circle seems the last place for the use of flowers. It is a scene of confusion caused by the heavy traffic. It is surrounded by car tracks. A band of deep green would tend to quiet and restfulness.

The Commission would call attention to the trees in the circle. They need the pruning and care called for by the peculiar requirements of the family to which they belong.

By order of the Commission:

Very respectfully, yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Lieut. Col. C. O. Sherrill, Director,
Public Buildings and Public Parks
of the National Capital,
Washington, D.C.

EXHIBIT C.

C O P Y

October 24, 1925.

Dear Colonel Sherrill:

The Commission of Fine Arts, to whom was referred the blueprints prepared by the architects for the Meade Memorial, showing details of the granite paving, benches, and tablet with bronze lettering, which are to be constructed in connection with the Memorial, return the blueprints approved, with the exception of the benches.

As has been explained in previous reports, these benches are to be uniform with those to be used throughout the Mall and therefore it is highly important that the design shall be such as may be carried out in other sections of the Mall. The changes from the architects' design are small but they are very important, and the Commission requests that the benches be designed in accordance with the suggestions herein made and noted on the drawings.

In regard to the inscriptions, the Commission feels strongly that the fewer words are the better. The Battle of Gettysburg was so great an event in the history of the Union that, beyond the mere mention of the name, any words of explanation are unnecessary and any adjectives fall far short of their intended effect. After repeated consultations with the Commission of Fine Arts, the Grant Memorial Commission decided finally to confine the inscription to the single word Grant. In this case, however, the fact that the monument is a tribute by the State of Pennsylvania should be of course noted, and the Commission suggests that the full purpose of the inscription will be served if it shall read:

THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
TO
MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE GORDON MEADE
WHO COMMANDED THE UNION FORCES AT
GETTYSBURG.

By order of the Commission:

Very respectfully, yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Lieut. Col. C. O. Sherrill, Director of

Public Buildings and Public Grounds
of the National Capital,

Washington, D.C.

EXHIBIT D

COPY

October 22, 1925.

Lieut. Col. C. O. Sherrill, Director of
Public Buildings and Public Parks,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

With reference to your letter of September 5, 1925, with which you submitted a revised plan for the development of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, between Potomac Park and the Zoological Park, I have to inform you that a set of prints of the plan was referred to Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect, who has been interested in this development for 25 years, as a member of the Senate Park Commission of 1901. Mr. Olmsted made a personal inspection of the Parkway on September 25, 1925. A personal inspection of the Parkway was also made by Mr. James L. Greenleaf, Landscape Architect member of the Commission of Fine Arts, on October 7, 1925.

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on October 8, 1925, gave especial attention to the plan with you and representatives of your office, and approved the recommendations of Mr. Greenleaf, which include recommendations made by Mr. Olmsted. The Commission report as follows:

SECTION NO.1: This drawing shows the elevation of the entrance to the Arlington Memorial Bridge as 31.0, whereas the rim of the Great Circle of the Lincoln Memorial is shown as 26.23, or about four feet lower than the bridge. We understand that this 31.0 elevation was determined by the desire to carry the camber of the bridge unbroken to a meeting with the rim of the Great Circle aforesaid. It seems to the Commission detrimental to raise the outer rim of the plaza at the head of the water stairs four feet to the 31.0 level and we ask consideration of this point. It would seem desirable with the entire situation in view: first, to keep the camber line of the bridge down as low as possible and then, if necessary, have a slight break in vertical curve at the last 100 feet of the bridge abutment, so that the outer rim of the bridge plaza shall not be more than 28.0 to 28.5 elevation. The Commission have noted that it is your desire that Mr. Greenleaf and Mr. Delano talk with Mr. Wm. Mitchell Kendall, representing the firm of McKim, Mead and White, architects of the Memorial Bridge, about this matter.

The Commission wish to emphasize the importance of the "Water Gate", contemplated in the Plan of 1901, and shown in this drawing, as an essential part of the plan of development in this locality. In this connection along the shore from the Water Gate to B Street, N.W., there should be a river wall of significant architectural treatment as to scale and design (not solely utilitarian as is the standard river wall), with a suitable terminal motive at the end of B Street. This river wall, of architectural dignity and significance, is very important so that the diagonal departure of the bridge from the axis may be balanced and the whole brought into proper relations. Also it follows, as you have previously recognized,

October 20, 1948.

Lt. Col. C. E. Kennedy, Director of
Public Buildings and Grounds,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

This confirmed the joint letter of October 6, 1948, with which you submitted a revised plan for the development of the Lincoln Memorial Park, between Potomac Park and the Lincoln Memorial. I have to inform you that a set of copies of the plan has reached the Commission. Mr. Hubbard, Director, Planning Commission, who has been interested in this development for 20 years, as a member of the Joint Committee on Beautification of 1901. Mr. Olmsted made a personal inspection of the Lincoln Memorial on September 20, 1948. A personal inspection of the Mall was also made by Mr. Olmsted, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Hubbard, and the Commission's representatives on October 7, 1948.

The Commission of Fine Arts, at their meeting on October 8, 1948, gave special attention to the plan with the representatives of your office, and approved the recommendations of Mr. Olmsted, which include recommendations made by Mr. Hubbard. The Commission report is as follows:

SECTION NO. 1: While drawing close the elevation of the entrance to the Arlington Memorial Bridge to 21.0, increase the rise of the Great Circle or the Lincoln Memorial is shown as 20.0, or about four feet lower than the bridge. It understood that this 21.0 elevation was determined by the desire to carry the number of the bridge roadway to a meeting with the rim of the Great Circle aforesaid. It seems to the Commission desirable to raise the water rim of the plaza at the head of the Lincoln Memorial to the 21.0 level and to so combine the two. It would seem desirable with the entire situation in view: first, to move the center line of the bridge down as low as possible and then, if necessary, have a slight break in vertical curve at the last 100 feet of the bridge approach, so that the water rim of the bridge plaza could not be above the 20.0 elevation. The Commission have asked that it is your desire that Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Hubbard take up with Mr. Kennedy, Director, Public Buildings and Grounds, and Mr. Wolfe, architect of the Memorial Bridge, these two matters.

The Commission desire to emphasize the importance of the "Water Gate" contemplated in the plan of 1901, and shown in this drawing, as a permanent part of the Lincoln Memorial in this locality. In this connection the Commission have the Potomac River to the Great Circle. Thus, the Mall is a river wall of a public park and architectural treatment of its roads and landing (not public utilization as in the Potomac River wall), with a building terminal motive at the end of the Great Circle. This river wall, or architectural dignity and significance, is very important in that the original development of the bridge from this water gate, or the Lincoln Memorial, brought into proper relation. Also it follows, if you have previously read,

that between North B Street and the bridge the stretch of retaining wall now building and the rough filling should be entirely removed and the river brought in against the new wall, thus making the proper shore line up to the Water Gate.

ALTERNATE GENERAL PLAN FOR PORTION OF SECTION NO.1. This plan contemplates an archway under the abutment of the Arlington Memorial Bridge and the Potomac Parkway carried through it. The Commission of Fine Arts requested that this alternate plan be discarded, since it obliterates the Water Stairs and the river wall treatment, and "shoots" the Potomac Parkway under the Memorial Bridge without balanced design and the dignity befitting the situation. The Commission noted your statement that this plan was made as an alternate study, and that it need not be further considered, you having come to an agreement on the Water Gate and the wall to North B Street to this effect with Mr. Wm. Mitchell Kendall, representing the firm of McKim, Mead and White, architects of the Arlington Memorial Bridge. While this is satisfactory as between Mr. Kendall, the Commission and yourself, yet, such is the vital significance of the matter, and in view of change of personnel occuring with the passing years, the Commission would be pleased to know that all records whatsoever of the "alternate plan" had been entirely obliterated, least it may crop up later to befog the situation.

SECTION 2: Attention is called to the site of the Titanic Memorial, along the Parkway, at the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and B Street. The necessary sea wall at this point, so that the Titanic Memorial may be erected, should be built without further delay. Also, E Street should be graded and paved from 24th Street to the river, so as to connect with the Parkway.

The Gas Company plant at 26th and F Streets is regretted, since so long as it shall remain there it will be an eye-sore to this part of the park and parkway development. The Commission understand that it has been the desire of the Gas Company to move to some other part of the District of Columbia, possibly on the south side of the city towards Alexandria (on the Maryland side), where enlarged grounds could be acquired, and this should be done as soon as possible. The Gas Company has not built on Analostan Island, since they understand it is to be included in the Park System of the District of Columbia. It should be one of the tracts soon to be acquired by the National Capital Park Commission.

The Columbia Granite and Dredging Company have their establishment at 27th and G Streets, N.W. The location is deplored, since it obstructs the view of the Parkway coming from the K Street Bridge down towards the river. The necessity of a plan of this character is recognized for building activities, though it is thought the plant may be moved to some other location without great difficulty, so as not to obstruct the view of the Parkway. Concerning this location Mr. Olmsted states:

"At the mouth of Rock Creek, i.e., below K Street, the parkway is now confined to the easterly side of the creek, leaving the

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

opposite bank in commercial occupancy.

This land, held by the Canal Company and occupied in part by plants for handling gravel and sand, lies directly across the view to the Potomac and the Virginia shore just at the point where any one driving southward in the parkway would otherwise have that view burst upon him on crossing K Street. I understand that the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway Commission found it impossible to deal with the Canal Company for this land on any reasonable basis. It may be inevitable that it should be omitted temporarily or permanently; but certainly such omission would be a great imperfection in the design of the parkway.

The canal having been abandoned for navigation, there would be no point in carrying out the old plan in so far as it calls for separating the canal from the creek, but it would be worth a great deal to acquire the land about as far as a line drawn from 29th and K Streets to the south end of 30th Street at the river, in order to provide an unobstructed park foreground to the river view at the point where all the southbound users of the parkway will first become aware of that view and eager to enjoy it. Whether north bound or south bound, users of the parkway will make the transition in this locality from the open broad river bank scenery to the self-contained sylvan scenery of the creek valley or vice versa, and considering the strength and persistency of first impressions this is probably the worst place on the whole line to permit ugly commercial structures and uses to intrude conspicuously on the scenery of the parkway.

It would seem to the Commission of Fine Arts that as the Canal Company has, according to reports, abandoned the canal for navigation, and is interested in business enterprises in the locality, as was not contemplated by its charter, the land claimed by the company, which is needed for the parkway, could now be secured.

Omission of border road from I to K Streets: The Commission endorse Mr. Olmsted's statement concerning this, as follows:

"This is a detail independent of other features. The wisdom or unwisdom of it would depend mainly upon the intentions and actions of the owners of the abutting land to the east. If this land should be developed for commercial plants in fairly large units, so that a lot depth of some 250 feet reached from 27th Street would be practicable, if no access to the parkway road is permitted from this property, and if a high fence is maintained to prevent trespassing, the present plan of omitting the border road would be the best. But if the land should be developed for small units, such as houses either with or without access across the parkway land, it would be better to provide for a narrow service street along the border of the parkway, somewhat as on the old plan. Under such conditions the narrowing by such a street of the space for planting between the main drive and the private property would be less injurious than either of the usual alternatives, namely--the cutting up of the planting space along the park drive by

opposite bank in commercial competency.

This land, and by the hard energy and solution it met by plants for material travel and trade, has already opened the way for the richness and the tingling knowledge, that at the moment is deriving a mutuality in this country which demonstrates that view based upon the overcoming of distance. I remember that the Jesuit Father Le Jeune, [illegible] it impossible to deal with the social economy for this land on any reasonable basis. It may be invisible that it should be united through rail or mechanically; but certainly such unionism would be a great importation in the design of the country.

Who could having been commissioned for navigation, there would be no doubt in carrying out the old plan in so far as it could not something the canal from the ocean, but it would be worth a great deal to acquire the land which is far as a line drawn from north and south to the south and of both street at the river, in order to provide an unobstructed park leading to the river view at the point where all the southbound means of the parkway will first become aware of that view and eager to enjoy it. Neither north bound or south bound means of the parkway will make the transition in this locality from the open broad river bank scenery to the well-contained sylvan scenery of the green valley or *vice versa*, and commencing the strength and consistency of first impressions this is probably the worst place on the whole line to permit ugly commercial structures and such tawdry unpleasantly to the scenery of the parkway.

It would seem to the impression of life that the canal company has, according to reports, abandoned the canal for navigation, and is interested in building only wider in the locality, as the not contemplated by its charter, the land obtained by the company, which is needed for the parkway, could may be secured.

Relation of Hudson River and Canal to Trade: The commission concludes Mr. Clarkson's statement concerning this, as follows:

"This is a lot of independent or water transport. The reason or whatever it could do and mainly upon the interstate commerce of the course of the shipping line to the east. If this land should be levelled for commercial purposes in mainly large units, as such a lot length of land [illegible] recorded [illegible] street [illegible] protection, it no doubt [illegible] to the parkway road is permitted [illegible] and if a high [illegible] to prevent trespassing, the amount [illegible] of building the junior road would be the best. But if the land should be developed for small units, and [illegible] either with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] it would be better to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

numerous entrances to private property and the use of the park road by vehicles serving the same, or else the turning of the backs and sides of buildings (usually more disorderly and objectionable than their fronts) toward the parkway and continuing annoyance and damage to the park by back-yard trespassing, throwing in of rubbish, etc., on a border not easy to police.

SECTION 3:

The Commission noted that the bridge crossing the parkway at M Street is closed. The Commission do not believe there is necessity for rebuilding the M Street bridge at this time, if, as proposed, a new bridge is to be built at N Street. This item does not affect other elements of the design. It is a matter primarily to be determined by street traffic requirements.

The attention of the Commission was called to the fact that the District Commissioners propose building a school at 24th and N Streets. The site was inspected, where work of clearing the ground is under way. Mr. Olmsted said, and the Commission concur in his statement, that he saw no objection to building a public school along the parkway, but felt in this instance the ground available in this square, about 1 3/4 acres, was inadequate for school and playgrounds. Mr. Olmsted stated that recently the Chicago Public School authorities have decided to require four acres with every school building. It would be an excellent plan to adopt in the District of Columbia in the interests of adequate public school and play grounds.

SECTION 4:

Beyond the Q Street bridge there is an important change in plan by which the main drive shifts to the east side of the creek 250 feet north of Q Street instead of at the old Lyons Mill road some 800 feet further north. The Commission concur in the recommendations of Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Greenleaf, who strongly urge that the old Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway plan, prepared in 1916, be adhered to in this respect. Mr. Olmsted states:

"This change (from the plan of 1916) would involve heavy cutting on the steep bank below the houses west of Sheridan Circle. This bank is shown on the new plan as graded to a slope of 1 to 1. It is now a dumped in bank on approximately the maximum slope at which the material will stand and is now convered with quite large trees which very pleasantly screen the backs of these houses from the creek valley. The plan as drawn would involve great risk of serious damages to the abutting buildings erected on top of this fill and would make a new and ugly scar for the entire height of the valley-side just where the existing bank of foliage is peculiarly important. To keep the road on the west side of the creek until the valley begins to broaden, about 500 feet further north, would avoid all these objections and seems to me in every way more desirable. It would not be necessary nor do I think it would be desirable, to keep the main drive on the west side of the creek as far north as Lyons Mill Road, which was done on the old plan. Incidentally I think it would be better as well as cheaper to use the Lyons Mill Road merely as a foot-path entrance to the parkway, preserving its sylvan character

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

between the two cemeteries, rather than make it into a roadway denuded of its trees and brushes.

Both Mr. Olmsted and Mr. Greenleaf call attention to the beautiful natural, wooded road on the east bank of Rock Creek extending from the vicinity of Lyons Mill to Massachusetts Avenue, and urge that it be made part of the parkway. This road can be readily adapted to the parkway, and it would serve as a connecting road from Massachusetts Avenue into the parkway drive in the valley of Rock Creek. Mr. Olmsted calls attention to the fact that the connecting lateral road from the vicinity of Lyons Mill to Massachusetts Avenue is quite different from that in the old plan, and states:

> It is much less crooked on the new plan than on the old, which is in so far an obvious improvement, but if the main drive were located as suggested above (on the west side of the creek from the Q Street Bridge to the Lyons Mill Road), it would fit the new location for this lateral road which the old location for the main drive would not. It is my recollection, however, that the lateral road on the old plan was at most points much better fitted to the topography and the very lovely existing growth of trees. At all events the new plan indicates a practically complete regrading of the valley side in cut and fill, with cut banks frequently on a slope of 1 to 1 and filled banks on a slope of 1 1/2 to 1, difficult if not impossible for the reestablishment and maintenance of a satisfactory woodland growth all the way from the Lyons Mill ruins to Massachusetts Avenue and from the creek side of the main drive to a line above the lateral road, except for a few small spots. Thus to wipe out of existence a long stretch of existing woods of great natural beauty would be a sacrifice of park values and in my opinion cannot be justified. Even if it should be found on careful study that the widths, locations and grades of the roads and paths could not be substantially improved in their relation to the natural surface, which I can hardly believe, I am confident that the preservation of the existing trees adjacent to them would justify the liberal use of the properly designed retaining walls at almost any cost. Better delay opening some or all of the roads intended to make the parkway accessible and enjoyable by the public than to open them in such a way as to destroy the beauty which it is their purpose to make accessible.

If the existing upper level natural road is adapted to the Parkway from Lyons Mill to Massachusetts Avenue the necessary width of that road can be secured by grading into the bank on the east, where the existing trees are generally of less account. Additional land should be acquired where more than one lot depth has been left in private ownership along Massachusetts Avenue, replanting a wide border of forest trees on the space which would be left between the park drive and the buildings, thus making a separate border road at this point unnecessary.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

SECTION 5: The main drive crosses under the Massachusetts Avenue fill at elevation 31, seventy-eight feet below the street level, by a tunnel some 200 feet long. The sheet marked "Section 5" differs from that marked "Section 4" in showing the Massachusetts Avenue fill wholly removed and replaced by a new bridge. Mr. Olmsted suggests a restudy of this portion so as to provide for a short cut under Massachusetts Avenue perhaps 25 feet below the street. He suggests that the proposed tunnel for the parkway under Massachusetts Avenue may be too dark. Mr. Greenleaf recommends, and the Commission of Fine Arts concur in his recommendation, that the driveway be completed now along the creek at water level, and that a proper bridge be constructed along Massachusetts Avenue.

This section of the parkway in the valley of Rock Creek should be made the subject of further careful study, with a view to making the parkway safe from floods, building no more retaining walls than absolutely necessary, and saving as much of the natural woodland scenery in the valley as possible.

MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE TO ADAMS MILL ROAD: After walking from Massachusetts Avenue, under the Connecticut Avenue Bridge, to the Zoological Park, connecting with the Adams Mill Road, Mr. Greenleaf feels that it is entirely possible at a point further up stream to return the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway to the east bank of Rock Creek into the Zoological Park and connect with the Adams Mill Road. The Commission of Fine Arts are heartily in favor of this, and recommend that the necessary steps be taken to acquire that part of the Zoological Park on the east bank of Rock Creek from the Calvert Street Bridge to the Adams Mill Road. Because of the steep slope it is impracticable to make the exit of the Parkway on the east bank of Rock Creek at Calvert Street, whereas the Adams Mill Road exit already exists and is very suitable both as an exit from and as an entrance into the Parkway.

On the west bank of Rock Creek from Massachusetts Avenue to Calvert Street serious problems arise in the development of the Parkway. This part of the plan should be made the subject of further very careful study on the ground, with a view to having the driveway on that side of the creek extend along the valley as near as possible. The old plan contemplated a driveway connecting with Connecticut Avenue and Calvert Street.

These comments and suggestions seem to the Commission of Fine Arts the more important in setting forth the difference between the old plan of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway and the new. The old plan had this advantage, that it was made on an excellent 40 foot detailed topographic map, whereas, the new plan is made on a 100 foot scale. While this new plan is admirable in many respects and shows careful and skilled study, the Commission recommend that the new drawings be made on a 40 foot scale, using the 40 foot detailed topographic map of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway as a basis. The importance of the project is great. The natural scenic assets and opportunities of the situation are notable. Needless and irreparable sacrifice of these opportunities and assets will result unless a complete, thoroughly studied plan is made at the beginning. The danger of falling into

such sacrifices needlessly is too imminent to permit of adopting the present plan as a whole and trusting to subsequent perfecting by detailed adjustments on the ground as the work progresses.

The Commission believe that you appreciate the fact that the work of completing the plan is one requiring the patient, laborious plan of trying out and fitting the plan on the ground in detail, by a landscape architect alert to all the scenic assets and opportunities of the situation. He himself must be satisfied that the plan embodies and preserves those opportunities and natural assets to the utmost degree consistent with the controlling practicable requirements.

By order of the Commission:

Very respectfully, yours,

Charles Moore,

Chairman.

Exhibit E.

EXHIBIT E.

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO
THE DIRECTOR

OFFICE OF
PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC PARKS
OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

REFER TO _____

RECEIVED
THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS,
WASHINGTON D. C.
OCT 26 1925
NOTED

October 23, 1925.

Mr. Charles Moore, Chairman,
Commission of Fine Arts,
Interior Department Building,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Moore:

Many thanks for your two letters of the 22nd, one concerning the planting in Thomas Circle and one concerning the development of the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. The suggestions of the Commission in both cases are very valuable and will be most useful in our work.

In reference to the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the suggestions made therein will be given careful study in detail and you will be advised later of the result.

Already the roadway proposed between Massachusetts Avenue and Connecticut Avenue has been carefully re-studied on the ground with the result that it has been found possible to locate this on the east side of the Creek by making a slight change in the location of the Creek and thus entirely avoid the necessity of the destruction of a large number of beautiful beech and oak trees, and also with the result of avoiding a very heavy cut in the steep slope about one-half way between Massachusetts Avenue and Connecticut Avenue.

A further examination of this area on the ground indicates that it will be possible to carry a low level road of full width through the present Massachusetts Avenue culvert on a low stone embankment so situated as to allow the normal low-water flow without interference and when the water reaches above the height of the roadway there will be little obstruction to the high-water flow passing over the embankment. In other words the net capacity of the culvert will be very slightly decreased by this low concrete and stone embankment and the passage of the roadway for the present until an attractive bridge is feasible can be carried through the culvert. The public will thus begin in a short while to realize the necessity of a handsome arch bridge and will accordingly support an appropriation for it.

Arrangements have already been made to grade the roadway through the Zoo property up to and joining with Adams Mill Road, as suggested in your letter, and in the near future it is hoped that appropriation will be secured for extending the new roadway through the Zoo on the down-town side of the stream to allow day and night traffic up through the valley without disturbing the Zoo, which can be cut off by gates at the two bridges.

I would be glad if you would express to the Commission and to Mr. Olmsted my appreciation of their valuable comments.

Yours very truly,

C. O. Sherrill,
Director.